

NEWCASTLE EMLYN

INTRODUCTION

Newcastle Emlyn is a town that lies south of the River Teifi in Carmarthenshire. The town lies on the border of the two counties of Carmarthenshire and Cardigan. Newcastle Emlyn and Teifi is an area of history in the Carmarthenshire industry, whose rushing river was once the source of its industrial power. Filled with life, the market town grew around the point of the river crossing, which made this place a natural defensive position, built for the first time by the Normans. Newcastle Emlyn was an important trading town, nestled in rich farmland. Full of charming, picturesque paths by the river which flows along the thirteenth century walls of the Norman castle, from which there is a view of the Teifi River that indicates the strategic importance that this town once had. The Cawdor Hall, with its unusual clock tower, is the most important monument in the town (14).

Part A

Historical development

Newcastle Emlyn got its name from the castle 'New Castle', which was built on the banks of the Teifi River in the fifties of the twelfth century by Mareduydd ap Rhys, founded as a wooded-earth fort in the mid-thirteenth century and developed into a cohesive stone castle by 1287. Today, only the stone of the original defensive tower and the southern tower remain from the castle. Newcastle Emlyn has an old legend about a dragon terrorising the town and the castle.

Historically, up to the nineteenth century, the wool industry in Wales outperformed the coal industry. A cheese factory was established in Newcastle Emlyn former prison in 1920. This place has grown into a large cheese factory, giving employment to the nearby population.

The main industry has always been agriculture. By the end of the seventeenth century, many cities had recovered from the devastating economic effects of the Civil War. Throughout the year, there was a corn market in the Newcastle Emlyn area, because of the land in the area. It seems that the economic revival was mainly due to the industrial revolution, during which coal and iron smelters, and canals were opened in Kidwelly and the surrounding towns. This created a demand for agricultural crops, which brought huge benefits to the town. The demand for food products transported to nearby areas increased, significantly developing agriculture in the Newcastle Emlyn region.

Wool production was the main industry of West Wales and in 1895, there were 325 mills in the Teifi area. Godramamog Mill was a viable factory for 50 years from 1885 to 1935. Flannels were produced, which were used for workers' shirts (for example, for mineworkers or metallurgists) and military uniforms (6). As it took a long time to travel to the town, Newcastle Emlyn needed a railway. Although Carmarthen and the Cardigan Railway Company were founded in 1854 and construction began in 1857, it took another 38 years before the railway finally reached Newcastle Emlyn. Newcastle Emlyn, with its railway loop, was considered the centre of the old Tivyside community. Newcastle Emlyn Railway was closed to passengers on 15 September 1952, but still remained open to freight traffic. Freight traffic mainly concerned coal, crude oil, cattle feed and agricultural crops, including livestock from local markets.

Changing fortunes

The impact of the pandemic has undoubtedly had an unfortunate impact on business at Newcastle Emlyn and will continue to be felt for some time to come. For this reason, there is now a need to protect and create new jobs, especially in sectors such as retail, entertainment and hospitality. Lack

of employment is the reason for the depopulation of the town. A huge problem in small towns is technology, the climate crisis, decarbonisation, Covid-19 consequences and Brexit.

Between Genarth and Cardigan there is an ancient tradition of catching fish and traveling with coracle. The main use of coracle is fishing for salmon when using the network. Today, this method is used in very limited quantities.

Existing assets, structures and economic character

The wool industry flourished in rural areas of West Wales. This was influenced by factors such as: technological progress, which enabled the hand loom to be replaced with a mechanical loom meaning that weaving was faster and on a larger scale; location as quickly flowing rivers were driven by water wheels; a network of railway lines connecting Newcastle Emlyn with other regions of Wales; and the availability of raw materials as there was a multitude of sheep in the villages. In its time, the industry in the Teifi Valley boasted about 24 mills per square mile. Newcastle Emlyn flourished. The economy was developed to a very high level and life in the town improved. With the growth of industry, social life increased with more events happening in the town. Newcastle Emlyn was similar to a mining village in south Wales. The wool industry flourished during the nineteenth century. However, at the beginning of the twentieth century, it began to decline. World War I helped revive the industry somewhat because of war production. However, after the war, the decline continued. The Second World War again increased production, but it was short-lived, and the industry entered a state of final collapse. In the 60s, the fashion industry caused another short revival. However, after this period, the industry in the town slowly ceased to bring profits.

Key stakeholders and interest groups

In Newcastle Emlyn, High Street has become an attractive shopping destination and the street offers a range of great independent shops, antique centres, restaurants, florists and pubs. In the town centre there are currently about 80 companies with a diverse and interesting mixture of trade, services and offices (CO-OP, CK food), independent retailers, bakeries, furniture stores, clothing stores, electronics stores, jewelry shops, gifts shops and a small garden centre. The offer for tourists is also diversified by a wide selection of cafes, bistros, bars, take-aways, pubs and Hotel Emlyn and restaurant. There is also a pharmacy, opticians, beauty salon, post office, a modern library and Cawdor Hall local community facility. However, the townspeople feel there is a lack of bankers in the town and free ATMs.

In the centre of the town, around 10% of the property is currently unfilled, including several large and difficult to rent premises. A big challenge for the Newcastle Emlyn area is to provide efficient transport for the area. Narrow roadways and paid parking in the town is unfavorable for the shopping community, where for comparison large supermarkets have free parking lots. Local real estate agents report the need for more homes. Many of the premises located near the river are at risk of flooding, so there is a demand for cheaper, more ecological and safer houses in the area.

Newcastle Emlyn's economy is diverse and dynamic, although there are a few weak points that need to be addressed. The town's regeneration plan aims to address job shortages to maintain existing businesses and enable the creation of new jobs. The plan aims to develop and promote the town's unique historically distinctive centre as a living place for local residents and visitors, as well as to build on the visitor economy to benefit from the growth of the demand market. Development strategies for Newcastle Emlyn present the importance of creating new businesses and encouraging companies to stay in the town. Improvement of public space in the town centre is key including parking and safety on the streets for pedestrians and businesses.

Local/regional development strategies

Newcastle Emlyn and the surrounding area support a diverse range of business activities with more than 270 identified businesses, including the largest manufacturer, Dairy Partners, and micro-small and medium-sized businesses. Dairy Partners operates a cheese factory with more than 100 employees and 140 local farms supplying milk from a distance of 40 miles. The company is the largest employer in the town, but it is also of key importance among farmers. The town also has strengths in the catering, IT and biotechnology sectors, including Micropharm and Caws Cenath Cheese. The cattle market in the centre remains an integral part of the town. The economic and social function of the market has grown significantly since the closure of other regional markets in recent years. In general, the town's economy seems to have a good track record. The largest sectors of employment are identified at 16% as wholesale and retail trade, 13% as human health and social work and 11% as health.

Part B

In Newcastle Emlyn, data shows that a large part of the local economy is dependent on part-time work with low qualifications and low wage incomes. This leads to lower household incomes and a less skilled local economy with higher than average levels of work at home and self-employment, which has been affected by Covid-19 and Brexit. The economic situation at Newcastle Emlyn has changed significantly and the population is ageing.

Tourism is little developed in comparison with nearby coastal locations, although there is a lot of growth potential. Unfortunately, there are not many attractions for tourists in the town, which is why guests do not stay overnight at the Emlyn Hotel. However, outside the town there are still a few important attractions to see such as natural and industrial heritage, including Cenarth Falls, Cenarth National Coracle Museum, the National Wool Museum and Teifi Valley Railway. Cycling is a priority in Carmarthenshire and the National Cycling Route, Sustrans 82, runs through Newcastle Emlyn and connects to Fishguard.

The town promotes local online businesses. The website Visit Newcastle Emlyn focuses on history and shows local attractions. The site also has a link to the Facebook page, but it needs regular updates. However, Newcastle Emlyn has little to offer for families with children or young people visiting the town. The town is not promoted enough, for example, with the website promoting the Food Festival being rather lacking.

In 2015, a group of companies from Newcastle Emlyn formed Newcastle Emlyn Traders Group. They recognised the need to work together to promote the town, protect commercial interests and offer support networks to members. A leaflet was produced, which is regularly updated and widely distributed in the area, and a system of urban vouchers was introduced. The Visit Newcastle Emlyn website and a Facebook page were also created. Cooperation, supporting each other and integration is the ethos of the Traders Group. It is aimed at maintaining and improving Newcastle Emlyn's dynamic community for business, hospitality and residents.

With the introduction of Universal Credit, the government no longer publishes unemployment data as a percentage of the working population and has no further plans to do so.

The effects of Covid are very evident in Newcastle Emlyn. They are extremely negative for the local economy, but there are also positive sides of Covid as society focuses on what really matters: supporting the town and its economy. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, Carmarthenshire County Council initiated the 'Ten Towns' initiative for the development and resilience of rural towns in the

county. The goal of this initiative is to create a long-term development strategy for each town to help their economies. This initiative has been given new emphasis in the light of the pandemic to also deal with immediate economic recovery as a basis for long-term growth. At the start of 2021, Carmarthenshire's economy remains strongly influenced by the government, who support workplaces and business sectors. However, the pandemic has not contributed to positive results. The lack of growth in the economy is also affected by Brexit (7).

To regenerate towns, it is important to support the ones that are failing. Supporting residents to open their own businesses is one way to regenerate a town. A sense of community is also important to regeneration. Economic regeneration focuses on strengthening the economy, creating new jobs and expanding businesses.

Newcastle Emlyn is a twin town with Plonovez Porzay, a small town on the west coast of Brittany. Friendship began at the beginning of the 90s and since then there have been many exchanges between the two towns.

In 2014, Newcastle Emlyn was granted Fairtrade Town status. To become a Fairtrade Town, Newcastle Emlyn had to meet several specific objectives such as: supporting the town council, having Fairtrade products available in shops and cafes, having Fairtrade be supported by social groups and workplaces in the town and taking action to raise awareness and coverage in the media about the campaign. The Fairtrade campaign is about better prices, decent working conditions, local sustainability and fair-trade conditions for farm workers. Fairtrade is a certification system whose purpose is to ensure that a number of standards are met in the production and delivery of a product or ingredient. For farmers and workers, Fairtrade means workers' rights, safer working conditions and fairer wages. For buyers, this means high quality, ethically manufactured products. Fairtrade means giving farmers justice and equality in face of the greatest challenges facing the world.

Newcastle Emlyn needs a more balanced and enduring society that will focus on local businesses, local resourcefulness and a local support network. This includes supporting resilience and productivity in retail, food, tourism and culture.

To support local businesses, it is necessary to create a new business space, either through the development of trends, the creation of public buildings, the acquisition of vacant buildings or the creation of new common workspaces.

Carmarthenshire secures almost £3 million from the UK government to invest in local people's workplaces and businesses. This is done through finding employment, investing in local businesses and the community, and increasing the skills of the local population (8). As part of the Economic Recovery Plan, the Council focuses on protecting existing businesses and supporting new and growing businesses. The plan was developed after a detailed assessment of the short-term and long-term effects of the pandemic and Brexit.

Regeneration of towns is a very broad term that can refer to a wider spectrum of situations. It involves the reconstruction of built-up areas, especially where there are signs of urban sprawl. Urban regeneration began during the nineteenth century and went through a phase of significant acceleration in the 40s of the twentieth century.

Urban regeneration is primarily the reconstruction of failing towns through housing, reuse of buildings and encouragement to set up companies. Social regeneration is a process of solving social problems which includes creating a sense of community and combatting anti-social behavior.

Economic regeneration is aimed at strengthening the local economy, creating new jobs, developing enterprises and supporting the establishment of companies.

It is difficult to regenerate Newcastle Emlyn in all areas. A business idea nowadays should take into account the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, Brexit and climate change. We are not able to predict what the following year will look like for a business. A business that is worth developing is one where the owner is satisfied with the results of the business and has plans for the business' future. This kind of business would be a good one to invest in in Newcastle Emlyn, as long as the risks are thoroughly considered (9).

Thriving businesses, according to the forecasts of the global company Shopify, are companies dealing with health and beauty. During an interview with the residents of Newcastle Emlyn, the conversations did not present any proposals. In order to rebuild the town, people want more clothing stores, and above all, almost every person admonished about the lack of a shoe store. For the younger generation, online shopping is not a problem, but in an older community like Newcastle Emlyn, people struggle with online shopping. Other businesses that are worth developing are professional services, from consulting, through to planning and organising events, to animal care and personal trainers. It is also recommended to create business connections, for example, buying good coffee from a car mechanic.

The e-commerce platform and Shopify, which provides tools for creating online stores for more than 1.7 million online businesses around the world, conducted research among its customers and results showed that the enterprises most satisfied with their business results were those relying on the subscription model. 63% of businesses that used such a model admitted that they were satisfied with the results achieved, compared to 55% of entrepreneurs who did not use such a model (2).

During an interview with Newcastle Emlyn residents, they mentioned that they would like to encourage tourists to visit and would like more events to be organised in the town. The people of Newcastle Emlyn are very pleased with events such as the Food Festival, which promotes local food. In connection with the wishes of the residents, organising events would lead to good business in the region. This is a big challenge, especially when attempted for the first time. However, it is an art that can be quickly mastered. It is enough to learn the basic rules and have a specific idea for events. If there are no restrictions, then events such as music concerts can be organised. If there are restrictions, this can be trialed on a digital platform. However, there are many ways to carry out business events, from various trainings and networking classes, to organising and presenting products. It is worth starting with a specific niche, and later increasing the scope of services.

When organising events, it is also easy to apply the principles of balanced development. First of all, for events outside, healthy nutrition can be promoted and the use of plastic limited. Balanced event planning focuses on reducing waste and identifying green spaces. It also helps clients achieve their goals and principles regarding sustainable development.

Currently, combining services is a good idea as it creatively expands offers. During conversation with the residents, it was clear that most of the abandoned premises are large spaces. The costs of renting such premises are certainly too great for small businesses, which is why an effective alternative would be to create multiple different small businesses in one premise. As the population of Newcastle Emlyn needs shoe and clothing stores, both of these could be opened within a shared space.

A very profitable and fashionable business is making prints and own designs for polo shirts, t-shirts and shoes, especially for children as this can include drawings and inscriptions. Companies also often

order such clothing for entire teams. In addition, prints can be made for phones, hats, mugs, bags or sweatshirts.

As part of sustainable development, a business that renews technology can be opened. Every day in the United States, about 130,000 computers are thrown away. When it comes to mobile phones, around 100 million are bought a year, and only 20% of them are recycled. These are worrying numbers, but they also represent a balanced idea for a business model for renewing technology. In a town like Newcastle Emlyn, such a store would certainly garner great success, as renewable devices will have more affordable prices for the community.

A bank also is a necessity for the community. The lack of public toilets also makes the situation more difficult for residents, especially if the town would like to organise outside events. The community doesn't need more restaurants or pubs.

Conclusion

Regeneration of Newcastle Emlyn is certainly possible in a variety of different ways. Changing times, technological advances and the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic have undoubtedly contributed to the fact that many businesses in Carmarthenshire need effective recovery plans. A picturesque area such as Newcastle Emlyn, where there is lush nature that includes a rushing river and the walls of the castle, is undoubtedly conducive to walking or cycling. Tourists should be encouraged to visit it, and events organised in accordance with the principle of balanced development will certainly attract tourists and regenerate parts of the town.

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